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Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6187th meeting

Monday, 14 September 2009, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Rice	(United States of America)
	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Du Xiaocong
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2009/438)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (S/2009/438)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. von der Schulenburg to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. John McNee, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. McNee to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of participants to document S/2009/438, containing the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, and His Excellency Mr. John McNee, Chairperson of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Canada. I now give the floor to Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg.

Mr. Von der Schulenburg: I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to present the third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) (S/2009/438).

Today is a day of national mourning in Sierra Leone, following the death of approximately 100 people, who perished in the sea near Freetown when their ferry capsized. Most of the victims were schoolchildren. We in the United Nations country team have worked with the Government over the past several days to help recover the bodies and to provide immediate assistance to the survivors. Let me here express my condolences to the bereaved families. This incident is a reminder to all of us of the fragility of Sierra Leone's infrastructure and of how difficult life remains for the average Sierra Leonean.

At the end of this month, UNIPSIL will complete its first year of operations, and the Security Council will consider the Secretary-General's recommendation that it be extended for one year. The Secretary-General's report before members outlines the progress made in the implementation of UNIPSIL's mandate and the remaining challenges to peace and security in Sierra Leone. Let me therefore take this opportunity to go beyond the report and raise three general issues and make one more specific point.

As a first issue, I would like to highlight the magnitude and the uniqueness, from a historical perspective, of the task that Sierra Leone is trying to

accomplish. Since the end of the civil war seven years ago, Sierra Leone has embarked on a remarkable journey towards becoming a stable, peaceful and democratic country. During that short time, Sierra Leone has not only left behind the horrors of the civil war, but has also started to build a new national identity and create State institutions that will turn Sierra Leone into a functioning democratic society. Even more important, Sierra Leone wants to do so by maintaining its internal peace, promoting the rule of law, observing democratic processes and creating economic prosperity for its people. By any standard, that is a colossal task, especially within the short time frame within which we all want it to be achieved.

If history is anything to go by, there are very few — if any — examples in the past in which nation- and State-building have been a peaceful and democratic affair. Democracy came to many countries only after a certain level of economic prosperity had been achieved and only after a strong and educated middle class had developed. Economic prosperity was gained through long and difficult processes that too often were interrupted by economic crisis and misery. And, above all, the process of building nations and of creating functioning State institutions had taken most modern nations centuries to accomplish.

We now expect Sierra Leone to make an enormous historic leap forward by achieving peace, democracy and prosperity — and this within a short time span of only a few years. But Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world. It does not have a large educated middle class, and more than 70 per cent of its population remains illiterate. Also, more than 70 per cent of its young people remain unemployed, its child mortality rate is among the highest in the world and its State institutions remain weak. Sierra Leone's ethnic and linguistic diversity competes with its national identity, and traditional forms of governance compete with emerging modern Government institutions. The challenges that need to be addressed are therefore enormous. The question is how a poor country such as Sierra Leone can achieve peace, democracy and prosperity — something that most other countries could not easily achieve under much better circumstances.

I am raising this historical comparison because I feel that we all have to recognize the magnitude and uniqueness of what countries such as Sierra Leone are trying to achieve. We must pay tribute to the political leadership both in the Government and in the opposition, as well as to Sierra Leone's civil and religious society, for their efforts, their courage and their vision in having taken the difficult road towards peace, democracy and prosperity. The recently concluded joint communiqué that ended the March outbreak of violence is proof of the new democratic credentials of Sierra Leone's political leadership.

We also have to recognize that the road to peace, democracy and prosperity for Sierra Leone will be a bumpy, long and, at times, dangerous one. We must anticipate derailments and mistakes. There is no magic switch that can be turned on that would catapult Sierra Leone into the future. There are no easy benchmarks that will tell us that Sierra Leone is out of the woods. What Sierra Leone will need to succeed is time, patience, determined national leadership and continued international support.

This brings me to the second issue — Sierra Leone's importance in the regional context. Sierra Leone's journey towards peace, democracy and prosperity is taking place in a difficult regional environment. The political and security situation in West Africa remains highly precarious, and we are seeing worrying signs of military coups, ethnic and interreligious conflicts, and political intolerance re-emerging. We are also seeing increasing threats from international crime, illicit drug trafficking, smuggling, the unfair exploration of natural resources, and illegal fishing taking hold in West Africa. Given the interdependence of most countries of the region, that could ultimately threaten Sierra Leone's achievements.

On the other hand, a successful and peaceful Sierra Leone could have a positive influence on developments in the region. In fact, Sierra Leone, along with other countries such as Ghana, could become a model that could be followed by others and prove that peace and democracy can bring benefits and create prosperity. If we succeed in Sierra Leone, it would send a positive message that even one of the poorest countries in the world — a country that has gone through 11 years of exceptionally brutal civil war — can build a functioning democratic State. Sierra Leone is on the way towards presenting us with such a success story. Let us not miss this chance. Sierra Leone will need the international community to continue providing political, financial and economic support, but let us not forget that we, too, will need Sierra Leone to foster regional peace and stability.

Let me now turn to the third issue — the new role of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone.

I hope that, over the past year, we have been able to prove that the new concept of integrated peacebuilding missions works and that it is possible to draw down a large and expensive peacekeeping operation and replace it with a much cheaper and leaner peacebuilding mission. Let me here summarize one of the most important points.

First, UNIPSIL today is a much leaner mission with a light footprint. While at its height the peacekeeping operation had a staff strength of about 20,000, the new peacebuilding mission is now staffed by only 73. While the previous mission included 17,000 peacekeepers, the new peacebuilding mission no longer has any military personnel. The new peacebuilding mission has also become more national in character; almost half of its staff are now locally recruited, and 13 of them are national professionals. The peacebuilding mission includes more specialists, nationals and internationals, to develop sound technical advice, and has considerably fewer administrative and other support staff.

Second, despite becoming a much leaner organizational structure, we have been able to maintain a strong role as a political facilitator in the country, as demonstrated by UNIPSIL's role in helping to solve the recent outbreak of political violence in Sierra Leone and in bringing about the joint communiqué. And despite the much smaller staff, we have been able to maintain a considerable field presence throughout the country by joining hands with our United Nations development partner agencies.

Third, we have been able to give the peacebuilding mission a new orientation. Whereas the previous peacekeeping mission focused mainly on security, we are now focusing mainly on development. For this reason, we have developed a strategy that is based on integrating the political mandate of UNIPSIL with the development mandates of members of the United Nations country team. The result is the Joint United Nations Vision for Sierra Leone that was recently endorsed by the Government and the Peacebuilding Commission. In addition to UNIPSIL, 17 United Nations agencies, funds or programmes have signed up to the Joint Vision, working together on five priority areas, a set of joint benchmarks and 21 programmes. Let me take this opportunity to thank in particular the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, for his support in getting the new strategy accepted within the United Nations.

Fourth, in line with the Secretary-General's policy, we have been able to reach an exceptional level of operational integration between UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team that includes a joint strategic unit, a joint multi-donor trust fund, joint regional field offices, joint outreach initiatives, a joint medical clinic, joint security services and a joint vehicle repair shop. Let me take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues of the United Nations country team, as well as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, for their support and enthusiasm in bringing about a truly integrated peacebuilding operation. Our integration will be to the benefit of Sierra Leone and will help to improve aid efficiency.

Fifth, we are now working jointly with the World Bank and other development partners to improve aid coordination and increase national ownership, in line with the Paris Declaration. With the Ministry of Finance, we are presently finalizing a new and simple aid coordination structure. I am convinced that better aid coordination can utilize much more effectively the dollars that donors have pledged.

Sixth, we have been able to strengthen our cooperation with the Peacebuilding Commission. The recent special session was, in my view, an excellent example of this cooperation between the Commission in New York and a United Nations peacebuilding mission in the field. The Peacebuilding Commission has been and remains important to Sierra Leone. I would like to take this opportunity to thank especially Ambassador McNee for his great support and for bringing the international community behind our peacebuilding agenda.

Finally, we have been able to set up UNIPSIL in a way that should make any future transition towards a normal development presence, with a resident coordinator system, easy. All programmes are implemented by United Nations agencies; we share professional staff with United Nations agencies; most joint services, such as the regional field offices, are already managed by different United Nations agencies; and our new compound has been built with a view to becoming a future United Nations House. In fact, it is our integrated strategy, the Joint United Nations

Vision, that is the conduit for a smooth transition in the future.

Let me now turn to my last point, about funding. The success of Sierra Leone's road towards becoming a stable democratic country will largely depend on the level at which the Government will be able to provide a peace and democracy dividend for all Sierra Leoneans. This in turn will depend on Sierra Leone's ability to rally international financial support for its Agenda for Change. Also, the credibility of the new United Nations integrated peacebuilding mission will depend on our ability to generate resources for the Joint Vision.

I hope that we will be able to count on the continuous support of the Security Council, and on the Peacebuilding Commission to call on Member States to participate in the forthcoming Consultative Group meeting in London in November and contribute towards Sierra Leone's development. I also hope that Member States will support the United Nations multi-donor trust fund and give our new approach to peacebuilding the credibility it will need to succeed.

The President: I thank Mr. Von der Schulenburg for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. McNee.

Mr. McNee: It is a great pleasure to participate in the Security Council's consultations as chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Sierra Leone configuration. I last appeared before the Council in this capacity immediately prior to a high-level special session of the Sierra Leone configuration on June 10. I am pleased to report that the session was a clear success. My co-host, Foreign Minister Bangura of Sierra Leone, led an impressive delegation that included representation from the Government, a major opposition party and civil society. The participation of such a wide array of national stakeholders, including a senior representative of the opposition, was testament to the progress Sierra Leone has made towards fostering national dialogue and building an inclusive democratic society. I am also grateful to the Secretary-General's Executive Representative for providing insightful opening remarks today.

Beyond demonstrating that the international community remains committed to Sierra Leone, the special session also produced significant substantive outcomes. It welcomed the Government of Sierra Leone's Agenda for Change, endorsed the innovative peacebuilding framework proposed by the United Nations, the United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone, and launched a new multi-donor trust fund. These efforts represent an important step towards rationalizing peacebuilding efforts, enhancing coordination and improving the effectiveness of international assistance.

At the special session, the Peacebuilding Commission also decided to align its future engagement in Sierra Leone with the Agenda for Change, in particular focusing on three peacebuilding priorities: youth unemployment, drug trafficking and good governance. The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to advocate for greater subregional cooperation and the promotion of gender equality and human rights. This new, lighter form of engagement reaffirms national ownership and, at the same time, simplifies the Peacebuilding Commission's support to Sierra Leone.

With the strategy now firmly in place, it falls to Sierra Leone and the international community to address the remaining peacebuilding challenges. I am pleased to note that Sierra Leone has remained calm over the past three months. While the incidents of political violence in March signalled that the country remains fragile, the major political parties and the United Nations family in Sierra Leone are to be commended for their work on the follow-up to the joint communiqué. In this respect, efforts to extend these discussions beyond Freetown and to the youth wings of the major political parties are particularly welcome. So too is the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations that sexual violence occurred on 16 March during incidents of political violence. I am also pleased to note that the Peacebuilding Fund has provided useful support for the follow-up to the joint communiqué through its emergency facility.

These are all positive developments, but the international community must not become complacent. Sierra Leone remains fragile and must consolidate the progress made so far towards an inclusive, peaceful and democratic political sphere. Indeed, serious threats to peace consolidation remain. First, high youth unemployment continues to pose a latent danger of instability. While programmes have been initiated to address this problem, a more coherent and coordinated strategy is needed. In order to fulfil this role, the Government of Sierra Leone should establish the

proposed national youth commission as quickly as possible. In addition, support for the Agenda for Change's strategy with respect to infrastructure and agricultural development will help to spur economic growth and job creation for those most at risk.

Secondly, illicit drug trafficking remains a serious challenge. As it is a regional problem with global implications, I was particularly pleased to participate in the July launch of the joint West Africa Coast Initiative of the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States and INTERPOL. Not only will Sierra Leone directly benefit from this programme, but it is also receiving similar support from the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL and several key donors to improve the performance of its Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force. The fact that the Sierra Leone security agencies have recently destroyed substantial stocks of cannabis only highlights the need to address this issue before it creates domestic socio-economic problems.

Finally, progress is needed to consolidate democracy and the rule of law. The constitutional reform process has yet to be completed and capacity in the justice sector must be enhanced, both in the formal and traditional sectors. Similarly, the Anti-Corruption Commission is working valiantly and with some recent success, but more is needed to combat the culture of corruption in Sierra Leone. Continuing to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will also help to demonstrate to the civilian population that the conflict is truly behind them.

The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to support efforts on each of these core priorities, but Sierra Leone will not be able to pursue economic development and meet its peacebuilding challenges without active support from the international community. That is particularly true given the prevailing financial climate. Slower growth and the effects of significant currency depreciation will affect both the Government budget and individual Sierra Leoneans. The Consultative Group meeting scheduled for November assumes greater importance in this context. The international community must ensure that countries at a critical stage in their transition to permanent peace and stability are not left to suffer the effects of the financial crisis alone. Adequately funding the Agenda for Change and the United Nations Joint Vision will be essential.

In concluding, I would like to commend the excellent work of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, UNIPSIL, and the United Nations country team in Sierra Leone. Their approach is both innovative and effective. It is a model to be studied carefully and replicated wherever possible.

The Peacebuilding Commission remains fully committed to supporting Sierra Leone. In the coming months, the Commission will advocate on behalf of Sierra Leone before the Consultative Group meeting, monitor progress on the joint communiqué and engage directly on the three core peacebuilding priorities identified at the special session. In this effort, we look forward to the continued strong support of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. McNee for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone): Madam President, may I extend to you my delegation's heartiest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. My delegation's sincere appreciation also goes to the Council for the consideration of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), contained in document S/2009/438, and we thank the Secretary-General for such a well-accomplished effort.

Through you, Madam, allow me also to convey my gratitude to the members of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration, and particularly its Chair, Ambassador John McNee, for his effective leadership and instructive statement to Council; to the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael von der Schulenburg, for his very helpful and insightful briefing today; and to the entire membership of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Fund for their tireless efforts in ensuring that the process remains on course.

Three months ago, we met in this Chamber to consider the quarterly review of the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. At today's

meeting, we are undertaking another review, which should lead to an extension of UNIPSIL's mandate for the next 12 months.

In retrospect and by way of an attempted assessment, the Government and the people of Sierra Leone are convinced that there has been some significant value added. The rapid and innovative approach that the UNIPSIL leadership adopted to address the 16 March skirmishes that were sparked off between followers of the two main political parties truly exemplifies the raison d'être of the Office. In this regard, I am pleased to place on record my appreciation of the high level of maturity and commitment that the two main political parties have demonstrated, and continue so to do, in implementing the joint communiqué signed on 29 April to foster peaceful coexistence and responsible dialogue in governance.

Although significant progress is being recorded in promoting, among other things, inter-party dialogue and in combating corruption, narcotic drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime, as well as in enhancing security across the country, at the same time the Government is not oblivious to the challenges in addressing governance, human rights issues and the youth unemployment situation and its attendant uncertainties and consequences, and in establishing and making basic relevant institutional mechanisms and structures operational.

The economic and financial downturn is no doubt also negatively impacting the Government's ability to address some of the socio-economic challenges confronting our fragile peace consolidation process. In an effort to address those challenges, the Foreign Minister, The Honourable Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Chair of the Sierra Leone country-specific configuration, Ambassador John McNee, on 10 June co-hosted a high-level event to mobilize support and marshal resources for the Government's Agenda for Change and the Joint Vision of the United Nations country team as a coordination mechanism for partner collaboration with the Government.

In that respect, I wish to reiterate the need for support to the projected $350 million multi-donor trust fund for the implementation of the strategic frameworks announced at the June high-level event, due to be formally launched in London in November this year.

We welcome any resolution of the Council that extends the mandate of UNIPSIL for a further one year, to be reviewed biannually. On the issue of benchmarks, we consider that there are already built-in benchmarks in the implementing and monitoring mechanism of the United Nations Joint Vision agreed with the Government and that there is no need for additional ones that, in any event, would require the further express support of the Government and all stakeholders, which may not be readily and timeously forthcoming.

On an exit strategy and its time frame, much as Sierra Leone undoubtedly does not wish to remain indefinitely on the Council's peacebuilding agenda and to overstay its welcome, we are however mindful of the existing and emerging threats and challenges to peace, security and development confronting the subregion and of the need to continue monitoring progress through a UNIPSIL mandate within the framework of the ongoing strategies now being implemented. We believe that security within the subregion is still a considerable challenge and too fragile, considering the current subregional dynamics, the Yenga issue and the narcotic drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime in the West Africa subregion in general and in the Mano River Basin and Gulf of Guinea in particular, to warrant any foreseeable safe exit of the much-needed international presence, assistance and support that UNIPSIL offers and provides before the 2012 elections in Sierra Leone.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, including the opposition, members of civil society and all vulnerable groups, I would like in conclusion to reiterate our sincere gratitude to the Council, the United Nations, our bilateral partners and the wider international community for their continued engagement on Sierra Leone for a better and peaceful transformation and transition and to reassure the Council again of the Government's determination to maintain the momentum towards national recovery and peace consolidation by striving steadfastly to overcome the lingering socio-economic problems of the country and to secure its future development free from want and fear.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.